Appl. No. 09/700,712
Amendment dated: April 11, 2005
Reply to OA of: September 23, 2004

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-16(cancelled).

17(currently amended). A Δ *thy* A strain of *Vibrio cholerae* deprived of its *thy* A gene in the chromosome and thus ~~facing~~ lacking the functionality of the *thy* A gene comprising at least ~~one~~ one episomal autonomously replicating DNA ~~elements~~ element having a functional *thy* A gene that enables the strain to grow in the absence of thymine in the growth medium and the one or several episomal autonomously replicating DNA elements further comprising a structural [[gen]] gene encoding a homologous or heterologous protein.

18(previously presented). A Δ *thy* A strain of *Vibrio cholerae* wherein the strain has been deprived of its *thy* A gene by site-directed mutagenesis in the *V. Cholerae* chromosome for the deletion and/or insertion of nucleotides at the locus of the *thy* A gene.

19(currently amended). The Δ *thy* A strain of *Vibrio cholerae* according to claim 17, wherein the at least one episomal autonomously replicating DNA element is a plasmid.

20(currently amended). The Δ *thy* A strain of *Vibrio cholerae* according to claim 17, wherein the at least on [[the]] episomal autonomously replicating DNA ~~element s have~~ element has a foreign *thy* A gene.

21(previously presented) . The Δ *thy* A strain of *Vibrio cholerae* according to claim 20, wherein the foreign *thy* A gene is an *E. coli* gene.

22(previously presented). The Δ *thy* A strain of *Vibrio cholerae* according to claim 17, wherein the encoded heterologous protein is selected from heat labile enterotoxin B-subunit of *Escherichia coli* (LTB) and *Schistosoma japonicum* glutathione S-transferase 26 kD protein (GST 26 kD).

23(previously presented). The Δ *thy* A strain according to claim 17, wherein the *thy* A gene of the chromosome has the nucleotide sequence SEQ ID NO: 1, or said nucleotide sequence which has some natural or unnatural nucleotide extensions, truncations, deletions or additions that do not interfere with the natural function of the nucleotide sequence.